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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5551
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 6311
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SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: EVO CONTINUES TO LASH OUT

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer
reasons 1.4b,d

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Twisting the Ambassador's Return to DC
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¶1. (SBU) Despite a public statement that outlined the Department's concerns over the safety of the Embassy and the Bolivian government's responsibilities under the Vienna Convention, Evo and his ministers are now trying to twist the Ambassador's recall to Washington to suit their own propaganda needs. On June 17, Foreign Minister Choquehuanca said that he hoped that upon his return to Bolivia, the Ambassador "will be able to explain the reasons, the motivations, and the fundamentals for why they have given (former Defense Minister) Sanchez Berzain political asylum." Evo added, "If the Ambassador has been convoked, I would have wished that President Bush had also convoked USAID (so that) in this manner they won't keep conspiring against the (Bolivian) government and democracy." On June 17, the same day the Ambassador returned to the U.S., Evo responded to a press question about the attack on the Embassy, "It's not an attack, it's a reaction of the people against the politics of a U.S. government that protects criminals, harbors them. And the people have a right to question." Government Minister Rada told the press on June 18 that Ambassador Goldberg is the problem and that the Ambassador should stop interfering in Bolivia's internal affairs.

¶2. (SBU) Campesino groups allied with Evo's Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party called for the Ambassador not to return to Bolivia. El Alto Workers' Federation secretary Edgar Patana (one of the instigators in the June 9 attack on the Embassy) said, "(Ambassador Goldberg) should stay for good in his country, since we believe he is hurting Bolivia, due to the support of the right against the government." In a meeting in the coca-growing Yungas region, Evo repeated his allegations of a U.S.-led conspiracy against him and questioned those campesino leaders whom he views as siding with USAID. "It is not possible that some ex-comrades or current ones are behind USAID, when USAID leads a permanent campaign against Evo, against the government, against the people...There are enemies of the peoples of the world and one of them is the empire (the United States.)"

13. (SBU) In reaction, opposition party PODEMOS Senator Roger Pinto opined publicly that if the government "is always accusing and blaming the United States for everything that happens, why doesn't it break relations once and for all?" Rising to the challenge, MAS senator Felix Rojas suggested that the government might ask for a change of U.S. Ambassador or expel the Embassy.

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Comment
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14. (C) Evo has a history of outrageous and unfounded accusations against the USG, the Embassy, USAID, and the Ambassador. With Evo increasingly blocked within Bolivia and a worsening economy, his words are escalating as he attempts to use us as a domestic distraction. (Note: For the third time in six days, Evo was unable to attend an official event in an opposition state--this time Tarija--due to popular protests. Although Government Minister Rada claimed Evo needed to be in La Paz for the Bolivia-Paraguay soccer game, palace spokesman Ivan Canelas admitted the real reason for Evo's cancellation and warned of the possibility of violence if "criminal attitudes" continue. End note.) As we approach the August 10 recall referendum that could put Evo's presidency on the line, we worry about more attacks, both verbal and physical. End comment.
URS